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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TBILISI 000715

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SUBJECT: GEORGIA: PREVIEW OF FM VASHADZE'S MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY

REF: A. A. TBILISI 0697

[1](#)B. B. TBILISI 0711

[1](#)C. C. TBILISI 0681

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

[1](#)1. (C) The Secretary's April 14 meeting with Georgian FM Grigol Vashadze will help reassure Tbilisi that efforts to improve relations with Russia will not come at the expense of the U.S.-Georgia relationship. The meeting is an opportunity to recognize the restraint and flexibility Georgia has shown in recent weeks and months in regards to the territories and to urge the Government to maintain a measured path and commitment to democratic reforms, especially in light of recent protests. Vashadze is a moderate voice among President Saakashvili's key advisors. We expect that Vashadze will raise concerns about recent Russian naval maneuvers in the Black Sea and its reinforcement of troops in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, seek the Secretary's support at the UN for the renewal of the UNOMIG mandate in a way that supports Georgia's territorial integrity, and want to discuss the structure of a framework to implement the U.S.-Georgia Charter signed in January. We also expect Vashadze to express appreciation for the excellent Georgia language in the NATO Summit communique and the strong statements that the Secretary and the President have made in support for Georgia's territorial integrity, long-term development and security.

Vashadze - Professional Diplomat with a Plan

[1](#)2. (C) Foreign Minister Vashadze plays an increasingly important role in Georgia's government. He was appointed Foreign Minister in December 2008; prior to his appointment he served briefly as the Minister of Culture and as a Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He is a professional diplomat who began his career in the Soviet Foreign Ministry and received his undergraduate degree from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations in 1981. He speaks English fluently. He has proven extremely capable in thinking strategically about Georgia's relations with Russia, and during the August conflict was the Georgian Government's main conduit with Russia, primarily through direct contact with Deputy FM Karasin. At 50 years of age, Vashadze is significantly older and more experienced than his ministerial colleagues. He is known in Tbilisi as a cultured and respected figure, a reputation enhanced by his marriage to Tbilisi's prima ballerina Nino Ananiashvili. Vashadze, although unquestionably a Georgian patriot, has both Russian and Georgian citizenship.

[1](#)3. (C) In a discussion on April 11, Vashadze indicated that he plans to raise three issues with the Secretary, as time permits:

-- Russia's increased military activities. As reported separately (ref A) Post has credible reports of increased military presence by Russian forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. OSCE and EUMM monitors told us that the Russians

have more troops than usual in the Akhagori Valley during mid-April. The number could reach as high as one and a half battalions, or 1,500 troops. In addition, recent reports from the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and from UNOMIG indicate that Russian forces are strengthening their presence in the Black Sea. Both sources indicate that Russian naval and aviation forces, to include landing shipments and military transport, are moving from Sevastopol into the central part of the Black Sea. Georgia believes Russia's moves were timed to coincide with opposition-led protests that began April 9 in Tbilisi calling for Saakashvili's resignation.

-- Territorial conflicts/Geneva talks/UNOMIG. Vashadze will seek concrete steps to implement our commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity. He will urge the United States to support another round of Geneva talks taking place as soon as possible. On the UNOMIG mandate extension, he will seek our support for several key provisions: (1) monitoring of all military forces within reasonably broad, symmetrical restricted weapons zones on both sides of the cease-fire line, and in the Upper Kodori Valley; (2) monitoring of local law enforcement forces and, over time, co-location of armed UN police in the restricted weapons zones; (3) facilitation of voluntary, safe, and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees; (4) monitoring and promotion of human rights; (5) coordination and facilitation of the unhindered provision of humanitarian aid; and (6) promotion of political dialogue between the parties. He will urge the United States to support a broad mandate that can be extended to South Ossetia in the future, while avoiding deeply contentious negotiations over access and security

TBILISI 00000715 002 OF 003

arrangements. Our preliminary thinking as we approach the June 15 expiration of the UNOMIG mandate is along the same lines.

-- Bilateral framework. He will urge the United States to support a framework for implementing the U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership and will likely ask that the Administration commit to leading such a commission at the most senior level possible. The agreement was signed in January 2009 and committed our governments to a broad range of cooperation. The structure for implementing this agreement remains under interagency consideration and the Georgian side hopes that we will head this commission at the senior level or above.

The Political Backdrop to Your Meeting

14. (C) Your meeting with Vashadze will take place against the backdrop of ongoing protests in the streets of Tbilisi (ref B). Members of Georgia's non-parliamentary opposition have called for President Saakashvili to resign, citing his failure to prevent conflict with Russia and, in their words, his failure to produce meaningful democratic reform. The protest leaders have largely been unsuccessful in building public momentum for their calls for Saakashvili's resignation and have failed to coalesce around lesser demands for an increased role in governance. The numbers of protesters has been dwindling and the upcoming Orthodox Holy Week will keep the numbers down. The Ambassador has urged all sides to engage in a dialogue and has urged restraint on the part of the protesters and police in order to avoid potential provocations.

15. (C) Since the August conflict, tensions along the de facto boundaries with the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have remained high. Eleven Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs police officers have been killed and many others wounded since the conflict by sniper fire, IEDs and other attacks. For the most part, as advised by the United States and the Europeans, the Georgians have not used force to respond to these attacks. International monitors still do

not have access to South Ossetia and the UN's movements within Abkhazia are limited. The Georgians signed an MOU with the European Union's Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in which they voluntarily and unilaterally limited their military presence near the territories and provided full transparency on all military movements. To date, the Russians/Abkhaz/South Ossetians have not responded in-kind. In an Orwellian attempt at deflection, the Russians have accused Georgia of increasing tensions by building up forces near the territories, but all three international monitoring organizations -- EUMM, OSCE and UN -- have found that the reverse is true: the Georgians are keeping forces away from the territories, while the Russians, Abkhaz and South Ossetians maintain a significant presence near the administrative boundaries.

¶16. (C) Hopes for international mediation efforts, as well as continued monitoring on both sides of the administrative boundary lines, have not been realized. Although the February round of Geneva talks produced a modest success, a proposal for a dispute resolution mechanism, the Abkhaz and South Ossetians are now backing away from the idea. The Russians meanwhile suggested a late date -- June -- for the next round, which would be too late to discuss new OSCE and UN mandates, both of which expire in June, although in a recent discussion in Moscow it appears that the Russians may be willing to meet in May. This would be a welcome development.
Qdevelopment.

¶17. (C) As a result of Russia's invasion, President Saakashvili has re-committed his administration to a new wave of democratic reform and we are strongly encouraging him in this effort. The new Prime Minister, Nika Gilauri has responsibility for the overall direction of the economy as well as the implementation of the \$4.5 billion in pledges from the international community to support Georgia following the conflict. These pledges include \$1 billion from the United States. We have informed FM Vashadze and the Government that the final part of the USG \$1 billion pledge -- about \$242.5 million -- was requested from Congress as part of the Afghanistan/Iraq supplemental request that went to the Hill on April 10.

Afghanistan

¶18. (C) FM Vashadze will reiterate Georgia's offer of a battalion to support coalition efforts in Afghanistan. This offer of support by President Saakashvili made to Ambassador Holbrooke follows Georgia's announcement that it plans to send a company of troops to support a French deployment to

TBILISI 00000715 003 OF 003

Afghanistan. Georgia is waiting for us to provide details. In addition, Georgia has offered use of its ports, air space and other facilities to help compensate for the closure of Manas Air Base.

NATO and Georgia

¶19. (C) Vashadze will express his appreciation for the NATO Summit Communique language -- which he and others have told us was much more supportive than they had imagined was possible (ref C). Vashadze and President Saakashvili are grateful for unambiguous statements from you, the President and the Vice President on Georgia's territorial integrity. The Georgians are hard at work on a new Annual National Plan (ANP) for NATO that they see as crucial to Georgia's membership hopes. Vashadze will urge the United States to remain actively engaged on NATO membership issues. Recent rumors in the NATO international staff and among some Allies have suggested that Georgia's commitment to the NATO membership process has waned since the August conflict. In fact, Georgia is working hard to make the reforms and meet the challenges necessary for membership.

TEFFT